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Subject : Social Obstacles to Religion.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT.

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ANY BACK NUMBERS CAN BE FURNISHED.

SOCIAL OBSTACLES TO RELIGION.

"And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."—MATT. x. 36.

You will remember the connection in which this passage stands. Our Saviour surprised his hearers by saying—and it would doubtless be still a surprise if he were to utter it in our midst—that his coming was not to bring "peace;" that is, not at first. He came to send "a sword." There were ten thousand connections that had to be sundered in the spiritual development of his kingdom. The sword in the beginning; victory and peace only in the far future. That which he declared has proved true in every age.

There is no other influence that has been such a disturbing force as Christianity; and it has been disturbing in proportion as it was pure and sweet and loving. There has been nothing else that has wrenched off so many roots as the attempt to raise up generations of men to a higher plane than that on which they had been living. There is nothing that still lacerates so many cords, or wounds so many nerves, as when in a community the moral influence on any subject is carried up one or two or more degrees higher than it has been. Communities are so interaffiliated, they so grow together, that neither one person, nor a given number of persons, nor a class, nor a whole community, can be lifted up without deranging the combinations that have been formed. And there is nothing that deranges a man's social connections so much as his entering upon a vital, active, energetic, spiritual, Christian life.

We are accustomed to think of religion as the most beautiful and desirable thing in the world; and many persons who are harmoniously related to their fellows in the matter of religion—who have been Christianly bred, and are in Christian families—can scarcely, looking out of the windows of their own experience, imagine how it can be that when a man follows Christ his "foes shall be they of his own household." There are many whose happy experience makes it impossible for them to understand this except speculatively. But he knows very

little of human life who does not know that there are a thousand who are differently situated, where there is one who enjoys peace and tranquility in his religious experience. Many of you are perfectly well aware that there is nothing which requires more courage, more zeal, and more help, than coming up from a lower to a higher plane of life, and that the difficulties spring not less from a man's surroundings, than from his own disposition. It is not simply the reluctance of his own will, it is not merely his own selfishness, nor is it alone the plea and protest of his lower nature against the higher, that stands in his way. Those who are nearest to him, who have the most interest in him, and who in a certain sense wish him well more than any others, are often the very ones who are most in his way, who hang heaviest on his purpose, and sometimes draw him back with fatal defection. At other times they draw him back so as to double and quadruple the exertion required for him to break away from evil and take hold upon good. And so it comes to pass that "a man's foes" are "they of his own household."

No one has the power to do by you what that man can who lives next to you. He that is across the way, or in a distant city, and only touches you through some outward channel of business, may have some power to influence you; but he has no such power as one whose heart grows into your heart—for people in life grow like honeysuckles, that twine and twist themselves together, so as to forbid any separation except by the knife.

I propose this evening to show, *first*, the reasons why men labor to prevent their fellows from rising to a vital Christian experience; *second*, the motives that are upon men who are seeking a higher life; and *third*, the mode of overcoming such hindrances and resistances.

1. We are to remember that social life is not merely the accidental juxtaposition of man with man. Social life, even in its smallest divisions, instinctively organizes itself. Where there are half a dozen friends who have been accustomed to meet so that they constitute a little circle by themselves, each one that moves as a factor of this little circle will find that they are so interlaced one with another, they are so woven together, that they have a common interest which no man among them can meddle with without affecting, if not himself, yet his companions.

A discontented thread in a bit of lace wishes to withdraw itself from the compact of the loom; but if it is drawn out, the whole lace is injured. If this thread is removed, it leaves behind it gaps that are fatal to the perfect condition of those that remain.

Here are half a dozen men who have no constitution, no by-laws, no expressed or implied agreement, but whose lives have come together

and grown into each other like the over-crossing roots in a common sod, one of which you cannot transplant without cutting half a dozen others. If you take one out of this company of men, though they may not know what is the matter, they feel that something is wrong. One man feels his pride hurt; another feels his vanity hurt; another feels his appetite hurt; another feels his interests hurt. They cannot express it, they cannot analyze it, they do not know anything about it; but here is the truth that even half a dozen men co-related and acting together in business or pleasure, twine together, and form a little society, and come, in a short time, to work into each other, just as wheels do in a machine.

The smallest wheel in my watch, emigrating, would leave all the rest of the wheels, big and little, in a very sorry plight. Although it may be very small, and stand on its own rights as a wheel, yet, after all, it has been cogged, and notched, and adjusted, so that the whole structure depends on that. You might as well smash the watch as to take that out. Frequently it is the case that the members of a circle are so affiliated, so exactly fitted to each other, that if you take one out, all the rest are dissevered. And it is not surprising, it does not imply any great degree of depravity, to say that where a number of men are living an ordinary, an average, social life, and one of them is inspired with a higher, a holier religious purpose, and desires and means to go up on a level that none of them have been standing on, his emigration upward wrenches them all. And it is not strange that they try to stop it.

This is putting it upon its most favorable ground; but frequently not so much as this can be said. Men are often enlightened in this matter. They form little groups and societies, as I have said, and they are distinctly conscious, either that their life together is not a religious one, or is a mixture of good and bad, or is decidedly bad. Little groups exist all through society that do not wish certain demoralizing elements taken out of the way, because these elements are the nerve that vibrates enjoyment in their midst, and to take them out of the way would be to destroy the pleasure of the whole group. And so, when one would break away from such a circle, by entering upon a higher religious life, there is oftentimes the reluctance and resistance which comes from the impoverishment of pleasure.

Men frequently stand related to each other in such a way that if one goes out of the circle, it is like the going of one out from a quartette of singers. The other three are leaner on account of the absence of that one. Especially where, as is often the case, the melody runs, sometimes into the tenor, sometimes into the base, and sometimes into the other parts—if one or two are gone, the others cannot sing.

It often happens in social life that men are affiliated in such a way that they are dependent upon each other for their pleasures—so dependent that they do not wish any one to escape from their circle, and that if one does escape, the harmony of the circle is broken up.

This is still more so when pleasure takes on unallowed forms. Where the public sentiment of the community is such that men are obliged to evade it, as they often do, by going through subterranean channels; where pleasures are defended, it may be, among the men themselves, but are in such a sense illicit that they do not care to have them come to light; there is under such circumstances a secret harmony, an understanding; each one is a sentinel both to warn of danger and detection from without, and to keep traitors from escaping from within. There is nothing freer, where all have confidence in each other, than men in an illicit course of pleasure, and nothing more joyous for the time being—at any rate in its rosy hours; and yet, there is nothing more jealous and nothing more angerable than men who are associated together in pleasures which may be sweet to the taste, but which the public sentiment, if not their own conscience, disallows. And if one of them attempts to escape, it is the worst kind of treason, because it is treason on the most sensitive spot—on the very point of their organization. And it is not strange that they clutch at the escaping one, and by the garments, if possible, draw him back again.

It is frequently the case, too, that the escape of one from a circle towards a true and high religious life is hindered on account of the social ambitions which prevail. It is not necessary that a man should wear a crown on his head to be a king. You never saw ten men together that there was not a king among them. It is not necessary that there should be a tiara or a sceptre to make a pope. There never were half a dozen men together that one of them was not a pope. It is not in politics alone that there are systems of ranks and honors. There never was a household in which there was not an organized system in which the principle of ambition, of superiority and inferiority, did not have its play. There never was a little circle gathered around about some bright centre, some radiant woman, for instance, as in the French *regimes*, that there were not aristocrats, monarchs of the circle; that there were not those who felt proud that they had the power to entertain their companions—one by his wit, it may be; another by his humor; another by his reason; another by his recitation of curious things. Each one comes to the circle with his contribution, and for the time being he is regnant, and the others look upon him and rejoice, and burn incense to him. And in turn they are flattered and praised. And being flattered and praised, they come to hanker for flattery and praise. And it is very hard to see any of those who have been accus-

tomed to burn incense before you go to other gods. Men hate idols, with one exception—when they themselves are the idols. Every man wants to be an idol, and to have other folks swing incense before him. And if anything takes place by which men are led to fear that they are going to lose their frankincense, they snuff at it.

And so it comes to pass that if a person in a bright and radiant circle of friends is about to separate himself from that circle, anxious inquiry is made, "Are you sick?" "No, not sick, but *serious*." The worst of all possible sicknesses is seriousness, it is thought, when it means rising up to a higher plane of life. And circles defend themselves against men that are going to desert under such circumstances.

Another element which comes into play in analyzing the reasons why persons endeavor to prevent the escape of men to a higher religious plane, is the judgment and rebuke which is always reflected, by such a course, upon their own career. Every man is the natural and appointed judge and censor of all those who are doing worse than he. A handsome man interprets and measures the homeliness of the homely people that come near him. A tall man makes men short that are not so tall as he is. He does not do it on purpose; he cannot help himself. I have known short men who would not go into a room where there was a tall man. They desired to have all the benefit of their height without any unfavorable comparison. A strong reasoner reflects the inferiority of a poor reasoner. A good man is the natural judge of a bad man. And so it is all the way through life.

Now, in a circle of men who are coördinated with a certain sort of moral quality, who wink at each other's sins, and promote each other's pleasure, at the same time helping each other's consciences by maintaining a kind of conventional agreement, let one be struck with the fire of a nobler aspiration, and let his conscience begin to stir itself like a sleeping eagle that knows sunrise is coming, and all the others will begin to find their consciences troubling them. And they do not like to be troubled by their consciences. They do not feel the inspiration which their companion does, but they feel the reaction of that inspiration in the form of rebuke; and they do not like it. If one of a circle of men who indulge in intoxicating drinks, who are addicted to intemperance—not gross, beastly drunkenness, but *refined* intemperance—if one of a circle of such men becomes clean-lipped, his clean lips become a standing rebuke to those whose lips are wet every day and every night. They have been accustomed to enjoy themselves, unrebuked, in animal and social indulgence, in illicit pleasure; and they have been a mutual insurance company, in order that no man should suffer rebuke in the presence of the others; and if one of their number breaks away

and stands up so that they all see that their lives are grossly wicked, he becomes to them like a warning angel, pointing them to the day of judgment. And in such cases men that have been kind, and genial, and charitable, often become censorious, and disagreeable, and malicious, for no reason except that one of their companions wishes to change his habits and be a Christian. He has had very little experience in life who has not seen this.

Real, not ordinary religion, is the thing that brings about these results. A man can change sects a great deal easier than he can rise in the sect where he is to a higher life. A man can go out of the Presbyterian church into the Methodist church, and not be a bit better than he was before. A man can go out of the Methodist church into the Congregational church and not be a bit better than he was before. Emigration does not change character. A Protestant may become a Roman Catholic, or a Roman Catholic may become a Protestant, without being any better or worse than he was before. Therefore, men of a circle will frequently let each other escape and change sect without any protest. But when a man proposes to himself reformation, and a higher life, the cases is quite different.

A man says to his companions, "Look here! I am going to quit Sunday frolics." "What!" say they, "you are not going to be sober?" "Well, no; I am going to church with my wife." "Oh! going to be pious." "I am going to get *some* religion. I think I understand myself. I shall be with you all the week long; but on Sunday I will go to church." "Oh! that is all right. You put on piety as a sort of insurance. It will make you a better fellow, no doubt. Religion is very respectable. It is not a bad thing for you to have."

A man arrives at that time of life when he is married, and begins to have children about him, and he wants to see his children occupy good places in society; and he thinks it proper for one in his circumstances to let the world see that he has religion somewhere. He wants a religion that will not trouble him too much, but that will take care of his sins, and insure his immortality. The idea which thousands of persons have of religion, is, that it is a kind of insurance company for middle-aged people who, for social reasons, should have a kind of commitment of this sort.

Therefore, you shall find that men may change and shift about in these ways without exciting any oppugnancy among their circle. It is when, by the power of the Holy Ghost, a man's soul begins to lift itself up toward its immortality; it is when all that is bad in a man, or all the good in him that is perverted to bad purposes, begins to get the buffet, and his reason, and higher affections, and moral sentiments begin to be freer, larger, and more controlling in his life—it is then that

religion separates him from all those who will not go on with him in his new career.

It is under such circumstances that men say, "If you will not drink with us you are not of us; if you will not work with us without scruple, you are not of us; if you will not walk hand in hand with us, you are not of us." And if a man is brought under the divine influence, and he says, "I am God's, and I must obey his laws," then the line of division is run.

Oftentimes this takes place under circumstances which are exceedingly trying, as where it separates husband and wife, or parents and children, or near friends, or lovers, or partners in business. When religion has this effect, it is like a fire that runs between men, and burns everything in its course.

2. Let us see what the motives are by which this social hindrance works.

In the first place, there is the battle of fear into which men go. Fear is thought to be a very ignoble quality. You are mistaken if you take that view of it. Fear has not merely a low, basilar function. Although it may have a low form, it rises and takes on higher forms. It gives an edge to every one of the feelings. Fear joins itself to reason, and then it is an intellectual force. It joins itself to conscience, and to taste, and to love. Fear pervades the mind, and every single feeling. So when men say that fear is ignoble, they do not understand the range of its operations. Many men are wrought upon by fear. It operates differently on different men, according to differences in their nature or faculties. Some men are utterly devoid of fear. You might as well attempt to dissolve a slate roof by allowing the rain to fall on it, as to attempt to affect some people through the motive of fear. Some are stimulated and braced up by fear. Others are weakened and pulled down by it. In some cases it acts like a malaria, and prepares the way for other things.

From the highest to the lowest feeling, men are plied with this motive of fear. Sometimes it is in one shape, and sometimes in another; but whatever shape it is in, men know how to use it against each other. It is the instinct by which men manage one another for harm. If we were half as wise in snaring men to good as we are in snaring them to evil; if there were the same wisdom, the same instinct, by which we should know when to take them and how to touch them for their benefit, that there is by which we know when to take them and how to touch them for their harm, how glorious it would be! For men are to men in things bad, as a musician is to his instrument, who knows all its peculiarities of temperament and habit, and is facile with it. Men know perfectly well how to deal with things that are worldly, carnal,

devilish. It is only when we rise to the nobler development of manhood that men are unskilled and awkward.

Next is the battle of interest. Men try to dissuade their fellow men from true religion on account of the effects which it will have upon their interests in life. These effects are oftentimes produced on their business interests. Men say, to their companions, "Look here, my good fellow; there is no harm in your being religious if you do not make a fool of yourself. Election is coming on; and if you want to join the church, and you think it will do you any good, in the name of reason, join it; but, as your own Bible says, *let your moderation be known to all men*. If you want to do the thing up like a gentleman, why, go into the church; but do not make a fuss about it. You are smart, you are brilliant, and if you are sensible and wise you have hardly anything to do but just to wait, and the people will gradually drop into your hands, and you will rise step by step; but if you are going back on your friends in this way, how are they going to elect you to anything? If you are going to be *good*, that is the end of any chance for you. You cannot use any such material, and therefore your interests do not require it. You mean to be a successful lawyer, you mean to rise to the position of a judge, you mean by-and-by to be a member of Congress, and perhaps you have some idea of one day being President; but if you are going to realize these expectations you must begin right. You must not let yourself down on your old friends. If you go into the church, and take on religion in good earnest, you may turn out a minister, but you will not succeed in anything else."

It is not I that is saying this. You know that I am faintly echoing human nature and human experience.

To another it is said, "Why do you break up our little circle by going out of it? You say you are going to be a Methodist." "Oh! no, not that," says the man; "but I am going to live *Christianly*." "But you cannot live Christianly and advance your social position. I recollect what you started from. You came to the city, you know, a poor boy. You had everything to make; and you have got along remarkably well. You have good business talents. Three years ago you had no influence. Now you have been invited to the house of the principal of the firm. He has fine daughters; and you have as good a chance of getting one of them as anybody. You are a well made, snugly built, handsome fellow, and are pleasing in your manners; and if you only understand your hand, there is no trouble in your rising. Wait five years, and you can take your *pick*. Everybody who has daughters, and has money, wants the best kind of son-in-law: and you are in the market; and you are not going to throw yourself away. If you do not go up there when invited, and join in card and champagne

parties without regard to your scruples, you will make a fool of yourself, and stand right in your own light."

If I should go to these men, and, in this bald, vulgar way, hold up secular interest as a motive to religion, how they would resent it! But they do not hesitate to hold up professional and social prospects as motives to wrong conduct!

But sometimes it comes home nearer than that. An old surly man has a boy that he has meant should succeed him, and be the heir of his property, and take his place, and manage for him, if he would only be greedy, and coarse minded, and learn how to take a creditor by the throat and squeeze him till the blood flows out of his pockets! But the old man hears that the boy has been attending "those cursed religious meetings;" and he says, "If that boy is going to get his head full of crotchets, and talk about "generosity," and that sort of nonsense, I will cut him off without a shilling." He calls the boy to him, and says, "What is the matter with you?" The boy does not know what does ail him. He only knows that he feels very bad. He is satisfied that he is all wrong with his circumstances. And he blushes, and is ashamed, and is ashamed because he is ashamed. And at last he says, "I am going to join the church." And he means more by that than you think, perhaps. There is a dim consciousness in him that he has not been living a fit life, that he has not been pursuing a manly course; and he is determined that somehow or other he will break away from the things that are holding him down, and get hold of something that will carry him higher. And his father is "sweet on him," as it is said when a man is bitter; and there is a pretty quarrel started very quick. The young man is threatened. "Now do you choose. If you mean to be as sensible as you have been heretofore; if you mean to be obedient (and he reminds him that the Bible says that children ought to obey their parents); if you mean to walk in the path that I have marked out for you, why, it will all go well with you; and I would as lief divide a little with you now. And when I am dead you shall have the whole of my property. But if you persist in going with that sort of people, and become a ranting Methodist, that will be the end of it. I will find some other heir. Your cousins are quite willing to take your place."

This strong and most vulgar appeal would be conclusive to some natures. It would set them up. "As for me," they would say, "from this time forth I serve the Lord." But there are others who would be cowed down by it. There are some men who are very accessible to such resistance.

In all these ways, and in many others that I cannot describe, men's interests are assailed. And do not you begin to see that there is a great deal of meaning in the declaration, "A man's foes shall be they

of his own household"? Sometimes I have read the passage, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself; and take up his cross and follow me," and you have wondered about that; but do not you see, as I analyze the experiences of actual life, how full the world is of that which requires just such dealing as the battle and struggle through which we are passing?

Then there are persons who are peculiarly sensitive to praise. The love of approbation is strong in them. They love favor, though they may not love flattery nor compliment. There is a subtle quality in them such that they cannot bear to be on the shady side of men's opinions. They are peculiarly happy when the sun shines on their souls through other men's favor. And under such circumstances it is peculiarly the case that men are assailable through the direct or indirect influence of their love of praise. Therefore it is that a cautious and delicate-minded man can say things that will rankle like poison in a young man's heart;—and how much more a woman! A woman's eye, her tongue being mute, can, with one glance, at the right time, cut a man like a lancet. A circle can, by a judicious silence, make a man feel as though the fogs of New Foundland were on him. A man by skillful treatment can be made to feel as if he were a red-hot iron on an anvil, with strokes falling on him thick and fast. And to some natures such dealing is enough to well nigh crush the life out of them. They shrink and shrivel under it. Pity them. Do not blame them too severely. It is their weakness, though it may be their crime. While they are weak there, you are weak in some other point, so that you need succor, too. There are many persons who would fain escape as a bird from the snare of the fowler; but they cannot go against this raillery—this battle of ridicule waged with eyes and tongues. Raillery mingled with kindness, and employed in a winning way, is an admirable instrument for innocent pleasure. But have you never seen it wielded as a weapon of mischief?

Then there is the battle of dissuasion—not persuasion to great evils, perhaps, nor to any immoralities; but dissuasion from a higher life. "Do not give yourself up," it is said to one who is awakened to his spiritual condition, "to God and spirituality. Live among men, and be a man. Stay with us. Do not leave us." And it is very hard for a generous soul, a true nature that believes in fidelity to every relation, to go out from the circle to which he belongs, against their affectionate appeals. Ye are my witnesses, many of you.

It is not unfrequently the case that when one is disposed to rise from the level of a common enjoyable life to a truly religious and spiritual life, those in his circle attempt to stop him by undermining his religion. They say to him, "Religion is well enough in its way;

it has good uses; but there is nothing in it at the bottom." And frequently when one is inspired with such nascent religious desires, some old head takes him in hand, apparently to probe him and see how much he knows, but really to unsettle his faith, and put in its place doubt and scepticism. And it is much easier to unsettle a man's faith than to establish it. It is ten thousand times harder to remove a doubt than to infix it. It is, perhaps, with some difficulty that you can arouse a jealous thought between two friends; but when it is once aroused, it is like salt-rheum in the blood, which breaks out here and there on the body, and cannot be dispelled by medicine. And doubts—especially fundamental doubts—are diseases of the blood spiritual. Sometimes they wound the soul to its very slaying.

Men also hold up to those who are disposed to escape, the lives of Christians. They bring before them all the scandal of the church. They call their attention to the partialisms of men's lives. They remind them of the possibilities of their not succeeding. "Even if religion is true," say they, "it is a great journey that you are not fitted for, and that, therefore, you have unwisely undertaken. Though there might be circumstances in which it would be wise for you to undertake it, those circumstances do not now exist."

Active measures are frequently taken to prevent men from following their convictions and entering upon a Christian life. They are treated as if they were patients. Little parties are gotten up for them. Most agreeable offices of kindness are discharged toward them. Their interest, their fear, and their love of praise, are brought into the service. All the ways in which the mind can be subtly and gently played upon to turn them back from the course which they believe to be right, and which they would fain pursue, are resorted to.

Then comes the last and the hardest battle—that of love, "Oh, my wife," says the husband, "I feel like death to have you go. What am I? I cannot go. And we have lived together so many years without any discord, that it seems very hard that you should go, and that we should be separated. It is a *divorce*. I cannot live so." It is harder than to face Mount Sinai, where true lovers are united together and one turns to the other and says, "It is fatal. There cannot any longer be unity of life. There can no longer be any such thing as that perfect sympathy which, like a chorded harp, gives out harmonious music from all the different strings. If you get into a religious state of mind, both of us will be wretched."

It is when such things as these take place, that the words, "A man's foes shall be they of his own household," develop their true meaning. When read glibly as they often are, they sound like distant drum-taps in time of peace: but they sound like the long roll in time of war

when brought down to home-instances like those to which I have alluded.

"He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me ; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." This is anguish, when a soul is enlightened to feel its duty of allegiance to God, and the power of the world to come is upon it. As birds, when their time of emigration comes, and they feel the impulse to fly to the summer-land, and will not be stopped, either by the snap of the fowler's gun, or by the swoop of the hawk, or by any solicitation, but rise, and fly through night and through day, to find that summer-land ; so souls feel the fascinating call of God, and, rising, soar—and must, because the Holy Ghost is upon them.

Where, in cases like these, the brother pleads with the sister, or the sister with the brother, or the parent with the child, or the child with the parent, or the husband with the wife, or the wife with the husband, or the lover with the loved, it rends the very soul. And yet, no drop of blood was ever shed that one might be true to his own convictions, that God did not make that the seat of joy, unmeasured and abounding. Oftentimes the very pang and anguish that are suffered, are the labor pains by which other souls are born into God's kingdom. Frequently, under such circumstances, simple, calm fidelity breaks the snare and the charm that holds back one who is called to go and appear in Zion and before God. How knowest thou, oh pleading husband ! but that God will give thee thy wife ? How knowest thou, oh pleading wife ! but that God will give thee thy husband ?

There are other cases that I cannot mention, from reason of delicacy—the pleadings of partners of common wrong with each other—the great book unread here, but in the light of God's countenance like the mysterious characters that are written in invisible ink, and that come out on being exposed to light and heat,—the great unwritten book which contains a record of men's thoughts, and feelings, and silent transgressions. There is nothing like the unexpressed life of souls in this world. And there linger within the precincts of this house those who know that if it were not for these holdings back, these golden fetters, these silken chains, they would start up instantly and be men in Christ Jesus. And woe, immortal and terrible, to the guilty, one who slays the soul of his partner, and calls it love ! It is betraying Christ again with a kiss, to betray one of his disciples with a kiss to his damnation. Let him go. Do not hinder him.

It only remains that I should speak of the modes of resistance that one may lawfully set up against these things.

First, it should be made clear that you are in earnest, and sincere, and that that which is upon you is not a mere freak and whim. In

other words, that very course which you frequently take, half to conceal, and half to cover with a laugh the self-ridiculing smile, is very fatal. That which will set you right sooner than anything else, is evidence that your feelings of aspiration and yearning for a higher life are real and deep. If God has called you to such a life, and you have heard and know his tones, do not let anything beguile you into the pretence that it is not the voice of God, and that it is but little to you. Be in earnest. Let men see that you are in earnest. Take ground, and having taken it keep it, whatever it may cost you. Take it at the earliest possible moment. You must resort to no half-way measures, for that will increase the fervor of your enemies, and give them hope that with redoubled exertion they can win you back to yourself, and your irresolution will be but the occasion of your being plied more vigorously with attempts to balk and destroy your better hopes and purposes. Be resolute. Be sincere.

If possible, take with you your companions. How blessed is that solution where the whole household go! "If thou *wilt* go, Oh my wife!" let it be said, "then I will go with thee." If Adam went with Eve in the first transgression, so since, full often, when Eve would pluck the apple from the tree of life, love has carried her companion with her. How blessed it is for the whole circle to go! But if you are ready to go, and your associates will not go, wait not for them. Of all the snares and blandishments by which you will be beset, the worst will be those by which Satan will attempt to carry you back again. Do not be deceived by those who say, "Do not go too fast and too far, and you will carry your friends all with you." While you are waiting you will lose your fervor and impetus. The tide will run out, and you will be left. The golden opportunity should never be neglected for an hour. Go thou with them if they will go with you, but go without them if they will not. For of all voices there is none that ought to sound in your ear with such authority of love as the Voice that calls you. It is the voice of the Bridegroom. Let not the Spirit of God plead in vain with any man's reason, or conscience, or sense of manhood to-night. Count not yourselves unworthy to be called. Cast not these things behind you.

Above all things, if you are endeavoring for yourself, and against social entanglements, to rise to a true Christian life, remember that you need, and that you shall have, the help of God. It is a lonely way that the repentant sinner walks; yet there are stars behind the clouds for him. It is a most solitary path that he who has done wrong and means to do right, has to tread; but remember, as you tread it in all the pain of solitude, that if you could but see you would behold the form of Another walking by your side. There is One that says to you in the

hour of your discouragement, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." That faithful Chief, that loving Christ, that Shepherd, who seeks the lost sheep, and, if they cannot walk, bears them in his arms; he that redeemed your soul with his own precious blood, and seeks to lift you from a lower to a higher plane—from ignominy, dishonor, disgrace and death, to the joy of his ownership—he will never leave you nor forsake you.

If God is calling any man to-night, listen to him. If God is drawing any man to him to-night, do not hold back. Oh! my friend, *what will it profit you if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul?* Oh! generous and loving nature, snared in the wrong, but now repenting toward the right, let nothing draw you back. It is life if you go forward, and death if you go back. The call will never come again as it has come. Forsake father, and mother, and brother, and sister; give up all friendship, and each pleasure, and every prospect. One single moment in the forefront of that all-rewarding heaven, where Christ, in the glory of his Father's kingdom, and God's angel's shall meet you, will more than repay you for that which you suffer here.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We draw near to thee, thou Heart of love, in whom is our life and all the source of our joy. Out of our troubles we come—out of temptations, and sorrows, and burdens, and weariness, and doubts and despondency. How many paths lead hither! What path is there that brings not those that are wise to thy feet, O blessed One of the pierced hand and wounded side? And who that has ever come to thee in real need, and lifted up the heart, and cried out, does not desire to come again? It is the memory of thy graciousness, it is thy tenderness, which to us is more than a mother's, and more than a lover's, that brings us again and again. Thou invisible Presence, thou mute but mighty Comforter, unspeaking, and yet of blessed converse, how hast thou turned the night into day to us! How hast thou given us strength for weakness! How hast thou snatched victory out of defeat! How hast thou given us exaltation in the midst of temptation, and lifted us above our adversaries, and set our feet in strong places, and put a song of rejoicing in our mouth! Oh! how many escaped souls are here to-night, that could lift up voices in praising thy faithfulness and thy tender mercies toward them! How many there are over whom the waves would have gone if it had not been for thine outstretching hand! How many were foundered when thou didst come to them walking on the wave! O thou Saviour! it is not the world that thou hast saved, any more than the hearts of individual ones before thee. How many can say that thou art *their* Savior! How many souls, at the mention of thy name, are as bells struck, and full of sweet sounds that utter thy praise! We thank thee for the past. We look hopefully into all that way where thou throwest the light of thy great love. Thou art the *new* and *living* way of God—not the way of our reason, nor the way of our resolution, nor the way of our strength, nor the way of our skill. Thou lendest thyself to every needy soul. Thy strength and wisdom are over us all, as ours are over our little children. In thee we are saved from storms without and temptations within. In thee we are made victors over the flesh. We are more and mightier than they that are against us. We can set ourselves against the full flow of circumstances, and yet maintain ourselves—yea, and go forward in the right. Thou, O God, dost fill the soul with present joy, and all prophecy of coming good; and thou canst do easily the things which we most need to have done, and which are impossible to our power.

Now we commend ourselves again to thee, O blessed Lover! In the bosom of thy promises we nestle, and are at rest. There thou dost brood us. There thou dost care for us, and feed us. We rejoice in this paternity, in this majesty of mercy, in this endlessness of love, in all this wonderful grace, and kindness, and sweetness, and mercy; and the goodness of God shall lead us to repentance. Not against thee, O blessed Savior! will we let our hearts run. Not against thee shall audacious sins any longer have liberty. We desire to-night, in a covenant of love, faithfully to be kept, to yield ourselves to thee, to love thee and serve thee, and to walk in those ways of honor and truth where thou hast planted peace. And if there be struggling souls that desire to do this, come, O Spirit of the living God! to their rescue to-night. If there be those that are looking wistfully, beckon to them, and say to them, Come. If there be those that are coming, but very slowly, and with very doubtful tread, oh! give to them, we beseech of thee, power by which they shall be able to do all things. And we beseech of thee that thou wilt rescue any that are imperiled, and deliver those that are ensnared, if not for their sake, yet for thine own. For thine own name's sake, do works of mercy and of wonder in our midst. Turn back those that have gone away. Reclaim the backsliding. Save even those that have given up their faith, and their love, and their service. Deliver those that are bond-slaves unto sin. Go down again into the very shadow of death, thou all seeking Savior, to release the captive, to open the doors of despair, and to bring up from the borders of the dreary land those that without thee are hopelessly lost.

And so, we beseech of thee that this place may be filled with the signs of rejoicing of those captives who have been rescued and brought home. And may thy name be honored in the midst of thy churches, and thy glory shine in all the land. Spread revivals from church to church. Give to thy ministering servants more power, and to thy

truth more effect. And may we hear on every side of the growth of thy kingdom. And we pray that thou wilt grant that thy kingdom may come in all the world, and thy will be done on earth as in heaven. And to the Father, Son and Spirit shall be praises everlasting. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we beseech of thee that thou wilt bless the word spoken to-night, to needy souls. Quicken some that are dying. Quicken some that are dead, and bring them to life again. Draw toward thyself the ensnared. Open the prison doors. Break the cord. Destroy thou the chain and the shackle. We beseech of thee that thou wilt breathe a pure air upon the fetid and poisonous atmosphere in which many breathe. Disenchant those that live in a sorcery of the soul. Oh! that thou wouldst deliver those that are bound. Come thou again to seek and to save. May we hear the joyful testimony, may we hear the songs of release of those who are going home from captivity. Glorify thyself, and quicken us, and stir us up to take part in this glorious work of the Lord. Build up thy church. Comfort thy people everywhere. Advance thy banner in all the earth. And at last may every land, and every nation, and all peoples, see thy salvation. We ask it for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

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Machines of all the approved makes are kept on hand, or furnished to order. They are sold at the Manufacturer's prices, with all their guarantees. Purchasers have here the advantage of seeing and testing all kinds together, and are thereby enabled to choose the Machine best adapted to their wants. They have also the privilege, if not suited in their first choice, of exchanging for any other kind. Full instructions are given gratuitously.

Machines are also Rented by the Day, Week, or Month, either with or without the privilege of purchasing, which gives an opportunity to test them thoroughly before buying.

We also deal in SECOND-HAND Machines—Buying, Selling, Exchanging, etc. Old Machines are Cleaned, Adjusted, and Modernized, and supplied with all the Tools, Fixtures and Attachments required in their use. Needles, Thread, Oil, Soap, etc., of the best quality, are kept constantly on hand, and sold at the lowest prices.

Operators, with or without Machines, are sent into Families; and Machine Stitching of all kinds is done at the EMPORIUM.

The establishment is complete in its arrangements, and possesses, under the new management, superior facilities for conducting the business. Every effort will be made to please those who favor us with their patronage.

In dealing with this establishment you have
this advantage:

YOU CAN

EXCHANGE

FOR ANY OTHER MAKE

If your first choice should prove
NOT SATISFACTORY.

Machines sent to all parts of the country, and guaranteed to suit.

Full information as to prices, terms, etc., given to all who send address, stating the kind of work they wish to do.